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British Transport Police Authority

Board Effectiveness Evaluation 2018/19

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Introduction

The Authority completes a board effectiveness evaluation annually with independent input every three years. The aim being to ensure that its governance processes remain efficient and effective.

In 2015/16 there was an extensive review of governance arrangements between the Authority, police force and Department for Transport (DfT) conducted by the consultancy firm RSM UK in 2015/16.

In 2018/19 the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) reviewed the Authority's governance arrangements and provided a moderate opinion.

The Authority will have its first tailored review in 2019/20. This review will first focus on the continuing need for the Authority before seeking assurance with respect to efficiency and good governance of the Authority's operations.

Background

The 2018/19 business year has been busy for the Authority and its Executive Team.

The major areas of focus in 2018/19 have been:

- Efficiency
- Scottish devolution
- fulfilment of our statutory duties including;
 - Setting a Policing Plan
 - Setting a MTFP/budget
 - Defraying the expenses and recovering the cost of policing the railways
 - Laying our Annual Report and Accounts

Method

The Authority used the National Audit Office (NAO) board effectiveness questionnaire with a few small amendments (Annex A). This was sent to all Authority Members. The Head of Governance and Compliance followed up with phone calls to discuss responses in more detail.

The questionnaire focused on nine areas:

- Objectives, strategy and remit
- Performance measurement
- Relationships with Stakeholders
- Propriety, fraud and other leakage
- Delivery chain and project management
- Risk management
- Audit committee, internal audit and corporate reporting
- Culture
- The Boardroom

The scale ranged from 1 to 4 with one being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

The quantitative and qualitative data was analysed to enable the preparation of this report and proposed action plan for discussion with the Chair and then at the full Authority.

Findings

Nine questionnaires were returned and eight follow up phone calls completed. The questionnaires were analysed and the mean scores for each section are shown in the table below:

Section	Mean score	Ranking by most confidence
1: Objectives, strategy and remit	2.8	3
2: Performance measurement	2.5	5
3: Relationships with Stakeholders	2.8	3
4: Propriety, fraud and other leakage	3.2	1
5: Delivery chain and project management	2.6	4
6: Risk management	2.8	3
7: Audit committee, internal audit and corporate reporting	2.9	2
8: Culture	1.9	6
9: The Boardroom	2.8	3

The mean scores by question can be found at Annex B.

It can be seen from the table above that the two areas where there was the least confidence were performance measurement and culture. The reasons for this were expanded in the qualitative feedback collected.

The qualitative data provided both in the written feedback on the questionnaires and through the post questionnaire discussions was subject to thematic analysis. Where there had been variances in the questionnaire scoring between respondents, the qualitative feedback was generally consistent.

The feedback included both positive elements and areas for improvement. A summary of the key qualitative feedback points can be found in the table below:

Key feedback topics
<p>Relationship with BTP</p> <p>The relationship between the Authority, its Executive and BTP needs to be improved with a focus on building trust and openness from all parties. A clear understanding of where the 'line' is for all parties to also be confirmed.</p> <p>Liaison between the Authority Executive and BTP staff needed to improve to ensure committee paper requirements were clearly understood and the papers were fit for purpose and on time.</p>
<p>Committee Structure</p> <p>Members generally felt that the structure was working well. However, communication between the committees needed to improve so that Members had a better view of the 'bigger picture' and ensure there was not a risk of duplication. This could possibly take the structure of a more formal and regular chairs meeting.</p> <p>The format and content of reporting to the Performance and Delivery Committee needed to be refined.</p>

Executive Support to Members

The Executive to provide briefings ahead of all committee and Authority meetings. The briefings to provide any additional context required and provide a focus on the key points.
 The Executive to ensure that papers are circulated on time.
 Increased communication from the Executive to keep members abreast of political and industry developments etc.

Member development and cohesiveness

Portfolios were popular and Members were keen to get these back on track.
 The role of the Authority and Members to be more clearly explained at induction with particular focus on understanding where the 'line' is using current examples to bring this to life.
 A greater focus on member development opportunities would be welcomed.

Risk Management and Audit

Members were content that the Authority had sound processes for identifying risks and was clear on its risk appetite.
 The Authority has robust procedures in place for reporting on propriety, fraud and other leakage.
 The Audit Committee has sufficient expertise, support, time and access to key staff to enable it to discharge its duties effectively.

Business case and projects process

Business case and project processes need to be slicker and quicker at both the Authority and BTP.

Strategy and objectives

Members felt that the process for setting the strategy and plans was working well. There were some questions as to whether there were too many objectives. This would be considered as part of the next major Strategy review.
 There was a suggestion that separate objectives for the Authority may be helpful.

Culture

There was agreement that the Authority needed to focus more on culture and understanding the needs and concerns of employees.

A comparison with the scores from the previous evaluation in 2016/17 showed that confidence had fallen in a number of areas. In most cases this was by a very small margin that did not cause particular concern, however, in respect of culture and performance measurement the margin was larger. These areas have been picked up in the action plan for improvement.

On a positive note, two areas had improved significantly, including propriety, fraud and other leakage and scanning for external factors to keep the Strategy up to date.

A number of areas have been identified for improvement and these have been captured in the action plan which is attached as Annex C.

Conclusion

The overall mean response score has only dropped by 0.1 since 2016/17. The dip in confidence is focused particularly around performance measurement and culture. The Authority remains confident that it is meeting its statutory objectives.

The Authority has been going through a period of change in 2018/19 with a new Chair beginning in March 2018 and no permanent Chief Executive in post for the majority of the business year.

The outcome of this evaluation indicates that a lot of work is required to ensure the Authority is working effectively. The focus for the new Chief Executive will be to address issues raised in the Governance Review by GIAA and delivery of the action plan from this evaluation.

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Annex A: Questionnaire

1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Partly Disagree	3 = Partly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
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Objectives Strategy and Remit	1	2	3	4
1. The Authority has a clear set of objectives that are independent of those for the organisation				
2. The Strategy is well aligned to the remit of the Authority and the capabilities of the Force i.e. people, assets, intellectual property, financial and other resources.				
3. The Authority devotes quality time to reviewing the implementation of the Strategy				
4. The Strategy is updated reflecting any changes to the organisation's remit or the external environment.				
5. Significant programmes and projects are clearly aligned to the Strategy and fall within the organisation's remit.				
Further comments on objectives, remit and strategy:				
Performance Measurement	1	2	3	4
6. The Authority regularly receives reports on key outcomes and targets that flow directly from the Strategy and Policing Plan				
7. Performance information is integrated with financial reporting				
8. The Authority gets early warning signals of problems ahead that will adversely affect key outcomes, targets or financial performance.				
9. The Authority has a good understanding of the performance of BTP relative to other police forces, where appropriate.				
Further comments on performance measurement:				
Relationships with key stakeholders	1	2	3	4
10. Relations with the sponsor department are productive and supported by regular and open communication.				
11. The Authority's funders consider the Authority is performing well, has a string board and has a good reputation.				

Further comments on relationships with key stakeholders:

Propriety, fraud and other leakage

1	2	3	4

12. The Authority is aware of, and annually approves, the scheme of delegation

13. The Authority receives regular reports on fraud and takes steps to address any failures or perceived weakness

Further comments on propriety, fraud and other leakage:

Delivery chain and project management

1	2	3	4

14. The Authority receives regular updates on progress for all programmes and projects subject to Authority approval, and any others judged high risk.

15. The Authority is provided with timely, robust post evaluation reports for all major projects and programmes, including an examination of whether all intended benefits were realised.

Further comments on delivery chain and project management:

Risk management

1	2	3	4

16. The Authority is clear on its risk appetite.

17. The Authority has a sound process for identifying and regularly reviewing its principal risks, and makes the necessary amendments in light of changes in the internal and external environment.

18. The Authority takes full account of risk in its decisions, for example, in relation to proposed major projects and programmes.				
19. The Authority is aware of changing demand patterns and is confident these can be met from the resources available as recommended by the Chief Constable.				
20. The Authority is aware of the organisation's information needs. Any exceptions to best practice over data acquisition, usage, storage and destruction are reported.				
Further comments on risk management:				
The Audit Committee, internal audit and corporate reporting				
21. The Audit Committee has sufficient expertise, support, time and access to key staff and information to enable it to discharge its monitoring and oversight role effectively.	1	2	3	4
22. The internal audit function is independent of management, appropriately skilled, competent and complies with Government Internal Audit Standards				
23. The Authority is satisfied that there is no evidence of aggressive or less than fully transparent accounting in the financial statements				
Further comments on audit committee, internal audit and corporate reporting:				
Culture				
24. There is sufficient focus on culture and understanding the needs and concerns of employees.				

Further comments on culture:

The Boardroom

	1	2	3	4
25. The Authority is cohesive and combines being supportive with providing appropriate challenge and seeking verification.				
26. The Chair leads meetings well with a clear focus on the big issues facing the organisation and allows full and open discussion before major decisions are taken.				
27. Induction and development programmes ensure members remain up to date throughout their time on the Authority.				
28. The Authority constantly strives to improve its effectiveness by ensuring its own performance appraisal replicates good practice elsewhere.				

Further thoughts on the Boardroom

Any further comments:

Annex B: Mean scores by question

Question	Mean score 2018/19	Mean Score 2016/17	Direction of Travel
Objectives, Strategy and Remit			
1	3	2.8	↑
2	3	2.9	↑
3	2.7	2.6	↑
4	2.7	1.8	↑
5	2.9	3	↓
Performance Measurement			
6	3	3.6	↓
7	2.3	2.5	↓
8	2.1	New in 2018/19	
9	2.4	2.9	↓
Relationships with key stakeholders			
10	2.9	3.1	↓
11	2.6	2.8	↓
Propriety, fraud and other leakage			
12	3.6	2.8	↑
13	2.8	2.8	↔
Delivery chain and project management			
14	2.9	2.9	↔
15	2.2	2.3	↓
Risk Management			
16	2.8	3	↓
17	2.9	3	↓
18	2.8	3	↓
19	2.6	2.5	↑
20	2.8	New in 2018/19	
Audit Committee, internal audit and corporate reporting			
21	2.9	3.3	↓
22	2.7	2.8	↓
23	3.2	2.9	↑
Culture			
24	1.9	2.5	↓
The Boardroom			
25	3	3.1	↓
26	3.4	3	↑
27	2.3	2.5	↓
28	2.6	2.6	↔

Annex C: Action Plan

	Action	Owner	Deadline	RAG Status
1	A focus on developing a relationship of openness, trust and confidence between the Authority, the Executive and BTP to be pursued.	Members and Executive		
2	Clarity on where the 'line' is for the Authority, individual members and BTP colleagues to be established	Members and Executive		
3	The Executive to work with BTP colleagues to improve liaison with respect to reporting requirements to ensure they are timely and fit for purpose.	Executive		
4	Communication to be improved between committees. This could take the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dashboard of KPIs from the committees • Improved briefing from the Executive Team ahead of meetings ensuring context provided for decisions required • More regular chair's meetings 	Executive		
5	The format and content of the Performance and Delivery Committee to be reviewed and refined.	Members and Executive		
6	Timely circulation of meeting papers	Executive		
7	Improved communications from the Executive Team to the members including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive briefings focused on key points and additional contextual information required for meetings • Updates on legislative, political and industry etc news 	Executive		
8	Portfolio working to be reinvigorated.	Executive		
9	Member development arrangements to be improved	Executive		

10	The business case process at both the Authority and BTP to be slicker and quicker.	Executive for BTPA		
11	The Authority to spend more time focused on culture and assessing the culture within the force.	Executive		

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